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ABSTRACT

This booklet has been designed by the National Education Association to provide members of the united teaching profession and new entrants into the field with general information on how to find and apply for educational positions. The contents cover the basic steps of job hunting from compiling resume and references to locating vacancies, applying for a position, interviewing, and following up on applications. (Authors/JA)

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GUIDE TO APPLYING FOR EDUCATIONAL EMPLOYMENT

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This booklet has been designed by the NEA to provide members of the united teaching profession and new entrants into the profession with general information on how to find and apply for an educational position. The contents cover the basic steps of job-hunting, from advance preparation which the job-seeker needs to make, to locating vacancies, applying for positions, and following up on applications.

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GUIDE TO APPLYING FOR EDUCATIONAL EMPLOYMENT

I. Advance Preparation

Before starting to look for a position, the applicant needs to make a general appraisal of his job prospects and prepare himself with the documents and credentials he will need in making an application.

Appraising job prospects

The following are some points to check in appraising job prospects:

- *Availability of jobs.* At present, teacher vacancies tend to be localized by geographical region, type of area (metropolitan vs. small town), and field of specialization. Applicants should acquaint themselves with the general availability of vacancies and plan accordingly.
- *Certification requirements.* Requirements for teacher certification vary from state to state. Applicants should check their present certification status against the requirements of the state or states where they would like to teach. Information on certification requirements can be obtained from State Departments of Education.
- *Salary ranges.* Teacher salaries vary among different regions of the country and also among different school systems within the same state. Applicants will want to be aware of the level of salaries and other related economic conditions in communities where they are thinking of teaching.

Preparation of documents and credentials

Applicants should prepare in advance to furnish information and references regarding themselves and their qualifications.

- *Academic credentials.* Recent graduates may need to submit to prospective employers a transcript of their college grades. Graduating students who are planning to teach should check with the Registrar's Office or placement service of their colleges to find out about procedures for having transcripts forwarded.

- *Resume.* All applicants will need to provide prospective employers with a resume summarizing personal data, educational history, employment experience, and other information about themselves. A resume may also be needed in registering with placement services and will be a helpful reference sheet for the applicant himself to use if asked to fill out an application form. The appropriate form and contents for a resume are discussed in detail in Section III of this booklet. Resumes should be prepared in advance and duplicated in sufficient quantity to cover the applicant's need for copies.

- *References.* Applicants will also be required to provide employers with references from persons who can testify to their character and professional competence. There are two ways in which this is usually done. One is through the placement service of the college or university from which the applicant has graduated. Graduating students should check with their college placement services about procedures for filing references. Experienced teachers who wish to use their college placement files should update them with the addition of more recent references. References to go on file should be requested well in advance of the need for them.

  The other way for an applicant to provide references is to give the names of appropriate persons to his prospective employer, who can then get in touch with these persons to obtain references. Applicants should be prepared to provide employers with the following information about references: name, title, institution, address, and telephone number. It is both courteous and practical to request permission before giving someone's name as a reference.

  Letters of request for references should identify the applicant; explain his career plans, including both the type of position he is seeking and his reason for seeking such a position (the reason he wishes to

move, in the case of an experienced teacher seeking a new position); summarize any recent professional activities which may be unknown to the addressee; and request either a reference to be submitted for the applicant's file or permission to give the addressee's name as a reference.

When applying for positions, applicants should be prepared with four references, at least three of whom should be persons qualified to judge their professional competence. Recent graduates will want references from their college professors and advisers. Experienced teachers will need references from professional colleagues, supervisors, and former employers. In addition to professional references, applicants may be asked or may wish to provide personal references. A pastor, priest, or rabbi, or a family doctor, neighbor, or family friend would be an appropriate personal reference. Relatives should not be used as references.

II. Locating Vacancies

A number of agencies exist from which teacher applicants may obtain assistance in locating positions for which to apply. The type of service offered by these agencies varies greatly. Some will do most of the work of job-hunting for the applicant; others will provide only names and addresses of possible employers and the applicant must follow up on his own. In general, more comprehensive placement services require the payment of larger fees, while simple information services are available at little or no cost.

- *College and University Placement Services.* Many colleges and universities maintain placement services for the use of their graduates. These may be used by both new graduates looking for a first position and experienced teachers seeking a change.
- *State Education Associations.* A number of state education associations provide information about teaching vacancies in the state, either for their members or for all interested applicants. The type of services offered varies from state to state, ranging

from full-scale placement services to a simple listing of vacancies. A fee is sometimes charged for these services.

- *State Departments of Education.* Another possible source of information about vacancies in the state where the applicant wishes to teach is the State Department of Education. Some State Departments also provide placement services, for which a fee may be charged.

- *Federal and State Government Employment Agencies.* The United States Department of Labor operates the United States Employment Service with offices in states and cities throughout the country from which it is possible to obtain information and assistance in seeking professional employment in education. Applicants should call in person at the local office of the area where they wish to teach in order to register for placement or referral. There is no charge for this service. Some state governments operate similar services with offices in different parts of the state, which provide information about positions; some also offer placement services.

- *Direct inquiry.* Applicants may also find out about vacancies by writing or telephoning directly to the personnel officer of the school system in which they are interested in teaching. A letter is preferable and may be combined with a letter of application.

CAUTION. Private commercial agencies exist which advertise that they will place teachers. These agencies often charge exorbitant fees, and applicants are advised to investigate such services thoroughly before using them.

The National Education Association does not provide placement services.

III. Making a Formal Application

Application procedures normally include three parts: a letter of application, a resume, and a personal interview. Various additional procedures, such as the completion of an application form, are sometimes required by school systems.

Letter of Application

Except in unusual cases, the correct way to to apply for a professional position in education is by means of a formal letter of application. This letter need only consist of a few brief paragraphs, in which the applicant should state the following:

- Specify the position for which he is applying (or the type of position in which he is interested if it is a letter of inquiry as well.)
- Identify briefly who he is and why he is interested in the position.
- Make a formal request to be considered for the position, stating that a resume is enclosed, and offering to provide additional information and to come for a personal interview, including the dates and/or times when he is available for interview.
- Politely request an early reply.

Prospective employers are interested in the form as well as the contents of letters of application. Some of the things employers look for in reading applicants' letters include the following:

- Plain white stationery, 8½" x 11", with the applicant's address engraved, printed, or typewritten at the top.
- Correct business-letter style.
- Neat typing without erasures on a machine with clean type and a fresh ribbon.
- Brief and to the point (1 page maximum).
- Grammatically correct, but natural and unstilted English.
- Correct spelling and punctuation.

Resume

The purpose of a resume is to provide prospective employers with a clear, succinct summary of the applicant's background and qualifications. *A resume must always be submitted with a letter of application;* but, as indicated elsewhere in this booklet, the applicant will find it useful to have copies of his resume available for other purposes as well.

A resume should consist of no more than one 8½" x 11" typewritten page. The most effective form of presentation is a simple listing of information under appropriate headings. As in

the letter of application, correct spelling and neat typing are expected. Since the applicant will need several copies of his resume, he should arrange to have it duplicated; xeroxography or a similar photocopying process is preferable to the use of carbon copies.

A resume should present the following information under headings as indicated:

Name:
Permanent address:
Temporary address:
Home telephone:
Business telephone:

Position desired:

Personal data

Date of birth:
Place of birth:
Citizenship:
Height:
Weight:
Health: (indicate physical limitations)
Marital status:
Occupation of spouse:
Number and ages of children:
Draft status:

Education

High schools and colleges or universities attended should be listed, either in chronological order, beginning with the first high school attended, or in reverse chronological order, beginning with the institution attended most recently, together with the following details:

High schools: Name and location; years of attendance; date of graduation.

Colleges and universities: Name and location; years of attendance; degree and year received; academic honors; major and minor fields of study.

Recent graduates should include their grade point average. Teachers who have recently undertaken graduate course work which has not yet led to a degree should indicate the courses taken, semester hours of credit, and grades received.

It is not necessary to include elementary schools attended.

Student teaching experience (recent graduates only): level, subject, length of time, and grade received.

Certification status: type of certification and where valid.

Employment experience

Previous positions held should be listed, starting with the most recent, together with the following details: name and address of employer; years of service; position held; summary description of responsibilities; name and title of immediate supervisor.

Except in the case of recent graduates, it is not necessary to include temporary summer employment, unless the type of experience is relevant to a career in education.

Military service: branch, rank, dates of active duty, decorations, discharge; type of experience if relevant to teaching career.

Activities

Any activities relevant to a professional career in education should be listed, such as membership in professional and community organizations and offices held; publications; foreign language skills; other specialized training and skills; travel experience; and recreational interests.

References

Either list references, giving name, title, institution, address, and telephone number for each, or include a statement that references "will be furnished on request."

Personal interview

The purpose of a personal interview is to bring together the teacher and his prospective employer or supervisor so that they can find out about each other. The applicant should therefore go to his interview prepared to answer questions about himself and to ask questions about the school system, the school, and the position in which he hopes to teach. The applicant should also take along a copy of his resume, even though he has submitted it with his letter of application, in case it is needed. In addition, he should have a pocket-size notebook and pen to write down anything of importance the interviewer tells him.

Some of the things the interviewer will probably look for in forming an opinion of the applicant include the following:

- Appearance—neat dress and grooming.

- Mannerisms—nervous habits create a bad impression, as do chewing gum and smoking.
- Speech—articulate, good English; clear pronunciation without mumbling or hesitating.
- Personality—balance between self-confidence and modesty; able both to talk and to listen.
- Frankness—straightforwardness in answering questions, acknowledging areas of strength and weakness in qualifications.
- Professional attitude—sincere interest in teaching, the school, and the position.
- Special qualities that would make an effective teacher in the position.

The interview also provides an opportunity for the applicant to raise any questions he may have and, if the interviewer is the principal of the school in which he would be teaching, to form an impression of the person who would be his immediate supervisor. Some things the applicant may want to find out about, directly or indirectly, include:

- Details of the position—regular duties, extra duties included, operating procedures of the school.
- Employment policies of the school system—salary schedule, fringe benefits (retirement, insurance, leave, etc.); tenure policy; relations with teachers association and whether a professional negotiation agreement exists.
- Professional opportunities in the community—professional association, professional growth opportunities, inservice training program, opportunity for further college or university study.
- School-community relations—home background of pupils, attitude of parents to school and interest in education, relations with business community.
- Educational philosophy of principal and school—over-all educational aims, attitude to pupils (discipline, student activities, student freedoms and restrictions), attitude to innovation, opportunity for teacher initiative.
- Personality of principal—easy to communicate with, capable of giving clear direction, flexibility and willingness to allow teacher

independence, interest in subordinates, sense of humor.

It is also advisable for the applicant, when being interviewed, to try to see as much as he can of the school where he would be teaching and, if possible, to meet with some of the teachers, especially those teaching in the same grade or subject as himself with whom he would be working. This will provide additional, first-hand impressions that may be of help in assessing the suitability of the position.

At the close of the interview, the applicant will need to find out about the next steps to be taken on his application. Sometimes a verbal agreement about employment is reached at the interview itself. In other cases, the applicant may be expected to get in touch with the school system if he is interested in the position; or, alternatively, the employer may plan to notify the applicant after considering his application further. Whatever the case, the applicant should make sure that he understands the arrangement so that he will know both his own responsibilities and what to expect from the school system.

IV. Follow-up

After the interview, the applicant may find himself in any one of several situations. In each case, there is an appropriate course of action for him to follow.

Waiting to hear from the school system

If the applicant is waiting to hear from the school system and does not receive word within a reasonable period of time, he may write a follow-up letter asking for a decision about his application. This letter should:

- Identify the applicant and the position for which he is applying.
- Recall the interview.
- Reaffirm interest in the position.
- Request further word about his employment.

If the applicant has a particular reason why he must make a decision about his future very soon, he might include a brief explanation of this.

In response to such a follow-up letter, the applicant may receive a formal offer of employment, to which he should respond with his written acceptance, as described below. However, it is the part of prudence for an applicant to realize that continued silence from a prospective employer is as likely to mean that his application has been rejected as that it is still under consideration. Applicants who find themselves in this situation should certainly follow up if they are seriously interested in the position, but they would also be wise to devote attention to their other prospects for employment.

Letting the school system know

If the applicant has agreed to get in touch with the school system, he should do so as soon as possible after the interview. If he allows more than a week or 10 days to pass, he may find that someone else has been employed to fill the vacancy. His response should be in writing and will be similar to the follow-up letter described above. It should:

- Identify the applicant and the position for which he is applying.
- Recall the interview.
- Affirm a *definite* interest in the position.
- Request a decision about his application.

Confirming acceptance of employment

If the applicant has verbally accepted the position at his interview, he will need to confirm his acceptance in writing. This should be done as soon as possible after the interview. Probably he will have received from the school system soon after the interview a written confirmation of the offer, to which he should respond with his letter of acceptance.

If the applicant has received from the school system after his interview a written offer of employment, whether or not in response to an inquiry of his own, he will also need to respond with a formal written acceptance.

Such letters should state the following:

- Acceptance of the offer, specifying the position accepted.
- The time and place at which the applicant will report to assume his duties.
- The expected salary for the specified school year.

- Agreement with any other requirements specified in the offer of employment.
- Appreciation for the consideration received.

Declining an offer of employment

It may sometimes happen that an applicant decides to refuse a position he has been offered, either because he has received another more desirable offer, because his personal plans have changed, or because after consideration he does not feel he is suited to the position. His refusal should be in writing and sent to the school system as promptly as possible. The letter should include the following:

- Appreciation for the offer of employment
- A courteous refusal of the offer
- A brief explanation of the reason for declining.

Regardless of how events develop following the interview, *it is always necessary for the applicant to provide the school system in which he will be teaching with a formal, written acceptance of employment.* Until the applicant has written, signed, and mailed his letter of acceptance, he cannot regard his search for a position as complete.

PROFESSIONAL ETHICS IN JOB-HUNTING

In applying for and accepting positions, teachers are obligated to adhere to the best standards of professional ethics. Some specific applications to teachers who are seeking new positions include the following:

- *Sanctions.* As a matter of professional conscience, a teacher should try to avoid accepting a position in a school system under sanction by the state or national professional association for improper educational practice. Information about sanctions is published in the NEA Reporter and may also be obtained from local, state or national associations.
- *Legitimate vacancies.* A teacher should *not* apply for a specific position unless he knows that it is legitimately vacant, nor

should he accept the position of a teacher who has been unjustly dismissed. Applicants should consult with the local association about vacancies in which they are interested.

- *Other applicants.* When applying for a position, a teacher should *not* derogate, criticize, or comment adversely on other applicants with whom he is in competition.
- *Good faith.* A teacher should *not* accept a position unless he definitely intends to fill it. Applicants should consider carefully before deciding to accept a position, rather than accept the first offer they receive, only to resign when they receive a more attractive offer. It is improper for a teacher to continue looking for a better position after he has already formally accepted an offer.
- *Adequate notice.* After accepting a new position, a teacher is obligated to notify his present employer as promptly as possible that he is no longer available for continued service.

In general, it is advisable for all teachers to keep themselves familiar with the Code of Ethics of the Teaching Profession, as adopted by the NEA Representative Assembly, and to consult with their local, state, or national professional association if they have questions about its application in specific cases.